DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 312 726 CS 506 916

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TITLE The Development of an Instructional Program on Employment Interviewing.
PUB DATE 20 Nov 89
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (75th, San Francisco, CA, November 18-21, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Computer Software; Computer System Design; Computer Uses in Education; *Employment Interviews; Higher Education; *Instructional Development; Instructional Effectiveness; Teacher Developed Materials
IDENTIFIERS *Hypercard; *Interviewers

ABSTRACT

A team project was conducted to develop software designed to help undergraduate and graduate students play both the roles of interviewer and interviewee. The project was designed to determine how students with various degrees of experience of employment interviewing felt about the software. Students from three sections of a graduate level course and students from three sections of a senior level course participated in the pilot study. The composite sample consisted of 54 interviewing students and 73 writing students. After completing the program, students were asked to respond to two open questions and several closed questions. Results indicated over 80% of the participants felt that the amount of information in the review stacks, and the explanations about the responses to the questions concerning whether the answers were correct or incorrect were the most important advantages of the software program. Overall, the software provides both students who are inexperienced in interviewing and those with more experience, information that will help them perform effectively both as interviewer and interviewee in the employment interview. (Six figures are included.) (MG)

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The Development of An Instructional Program On Employment Interviewing

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CS506916

Speech Communication Association
Commission on Experimental Learning in Communication
November 20, 1989

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Abstract

This article describes the development of a software program designed to teach employment interviewing fundamentals. The features of Hypercard, used as the authoring system for the program, are discussed. Experienced and inexperienced groups of students participated in a study to determine their perceptions of the software. The results indicate that students liked the software and felt it would help them to perform the roles of interviewer and interviewee in the employment interview. Other results are discussed in this paper.

The Development of an Instructional Software Program
On Employment Interviewing

In the fall of 1987 I was awarded a Minnesota Macintosh Grant for the development of software to teach the fundamentals of interviewing. The awarded consisted of a Macintosh SE and Imagewriter II, as well as the following software: MacWrite, MacPlaint, Pascal Compiler, MacDraw, and Hypercard.

In the proposal I indicated that I would focus on employment interviewing and then focus on appraisal, informational, and problem-solving interviews. The software would be designed to help undergraduate and graduate students with various levels of knowledge on employment interviewing play both the roles of interviewer and interviewee. Sincoff and Goyer (1984) and Stewart and Cash (1988) would be the two primary content sources. The software also would be designed for students with wide ranges of computer experience.

The plan for the software was to:

1. Give the users access to background information on interviewing fundamentals such as:
   a. types of openings
   b. types of questions
   c. types of closings
   d. interview schedules

e. question sequences

2. Include questions about how the interviewing fundamentals reviewed in the program should be applied during the employment interview.
3. Give the users immediate feedback about the appropriateness of the answers they chose to the questions on the roles of the interviewer and interviewee.

Strategy for the Project

The first step after obtaining the grant was to assemble a team to discuss two topics: first what should the design guidelines be for the software, and, second what method should be use to develop the software.

After some discussion the design team decided on the following guidelines for the software.

1. Users should be able to use the software quickly.
2. Users should have the option of reading or skipping over explanatory material based on their own judgment of what they already knew about interviewing.
3. The design team wanted to follow the review material on the topic with questions on the topic.
4. The content specialist and information developer wanted the main teaching tool in the program to be the feedback given to the users after they chose an answer for a question.

Choosing the method for developing the software was one of the most difficult decisions. The following options were considered:

Option 1. Hire a programmer to write the code for the program in Pascal. A Custom program would produce software that would fulfill the purpose, plus the program would run on any Macintosh. Hiring a programmer to write the code for the software would be expensive, however, and modifying the code after the program was finished would require hiring a programmer.

Option 2. Use an authoring system for the Macintosh, such as Course of Action (COA). COA probably would have required a fairly long training period for at least one of the team members before development could begin. In addition, Course of Action is an expensive program, and software developed with this tool can only be used by people who buy a COA student disk. Modifications after the program was completed would probably have to be done by someone with considerable experience with the program.

Option 3. Use Hypercard software. Software developed with Hypercard seemed easy to use and would be transportable to other Macintoshes since Hypercard was being bundled with new Macintoshes and was inexpensive. Last the software could be modified by anyone familiar with Hypercard after the project was finished.

The project team, consisting of a project manager, content specialist,

informational developer, and programmer, decided to use Hypercard and set to work developing the software.

A Description of Hypercard

Hypercard is a tool for organizing and creating links between screenfuls of information. Each screen of information created by the developer is considered a "card." Cards with similar information-can be collected in a "stack." For example, several cards, each with the address of a client, could be joined together in a "client address" stack.

A developer can go one step further and create links between cards and stacks. The user can then move from card to card, card to stack, or stack to stack along these links by activating an area on the card designated by the developer as a "button." A button can take many forms, including an icon, a rectangle with developer-generated text inside, or a transparent rectangle.

Linking cards can be useful. For example, in addition to a "client address" stack, a "project" stack containing cards with descriptions of a current project might be included. These stacks could be linked by creating an "address" button at the bottom of each project card that, when activated, would move the user to the card with the address of the client who commissioned the project.

Problems With Setting Up the Stacks

Figures 1-3 provide background information on the interviewing program, interviewee topics and interviewer topics.

The design team originally wanted to organize the interviewing information into three stacks of cards: a stack with review and question cards, a stack with explanatory material, and a stack with cards containing feedback to each of the answers on the question cards. The team had planned to put buttons on the review cards that would be linked to the appropriate cards in the feedback stacks. For example, the project director and programmer planned to put a button on the review card for the topic "Ways to Prepare for Your Interview" for each one of the ways to prepare (e.g., research the organization). If the user chose one of the buttons on that card "research the organization" for example, the card with an explanation of "research the organization" would be displayed.

The problem with this setup was that the users would be forced to constantly navigate between several stacks. Would the users remember where they came from and what they had already selected on a card? Where should the users be allowed to return when necessaru in the review/question stack?

Welcome to Employment Interviewing

If this is your first time using a Macintosh computer, use the mouse to move the index finger on the little hand on the screen over the "Instructions" box and click the mouse once.

If you want to begin the tutorial right away, go ahead and use the mouse to move the index finger on the little hand over the right arrow and click the mouse once.

If you have used the program before and want to move to one particular question or set of questions, select the "Index" button using the index finger of the little hand.

Instructions **Index** **Authors and Sources**

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Figure 1: Introduction to Program

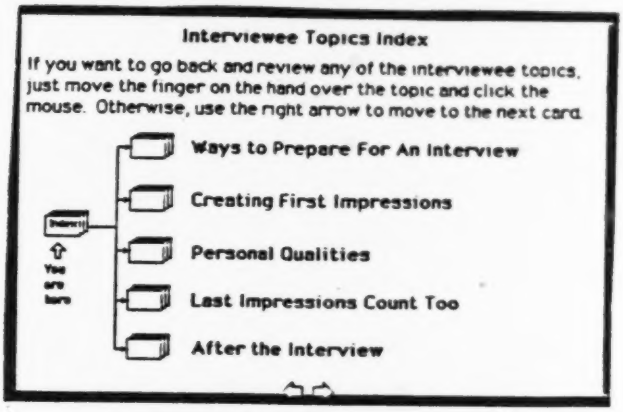
Interviewee Topics Index
If you want to go back and review any of the interviewee topics, just move the finger on the hand over the topic and click the mouse. Otherwise, use the right arrow to move to the next card.
Ways to Prepare For An Interview
Creating First Impressions
Personal Qualities
Last Impressions Count Too
After the Interview

Table 2: Interviewee Topics

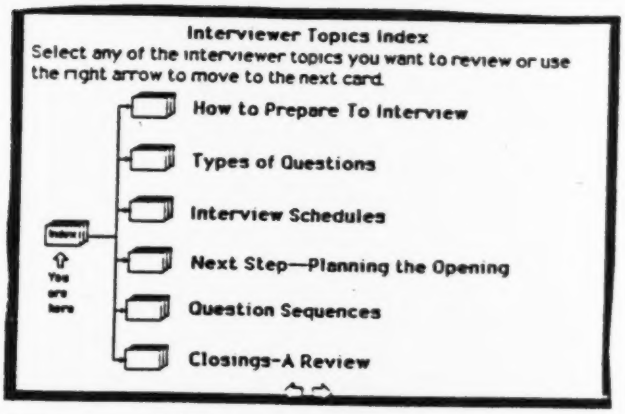
Interviewer Topics Index
Select any of the interviewer topics you want to review or use the right arrow to move to the next card.
How to Prepare To Interview
Types of Questions
Interview Schedules
Next Step—Planning the Opening
Question Sequences
Closings-A Review

Table 3: Interviewer Topics

A Hypercard Solution

The programmer suggested that "hidden" text fields should be used

--text fields on a card that are visible after a button is activated--to avoid this problem. For example, the content specialist could put the explanatory information on "research the organization" into a hidden text field right on the "Ways to Prepare for Your Interview" card. If the user selected the "research the organization" button, that hidden field would "pop up" on the screen, covering a portion of the "Ways to Prepare for Your Interview" card.

The "Ways to Prepare for Your Interview" card is shown in Figure 4.

(Insert Figure 4)

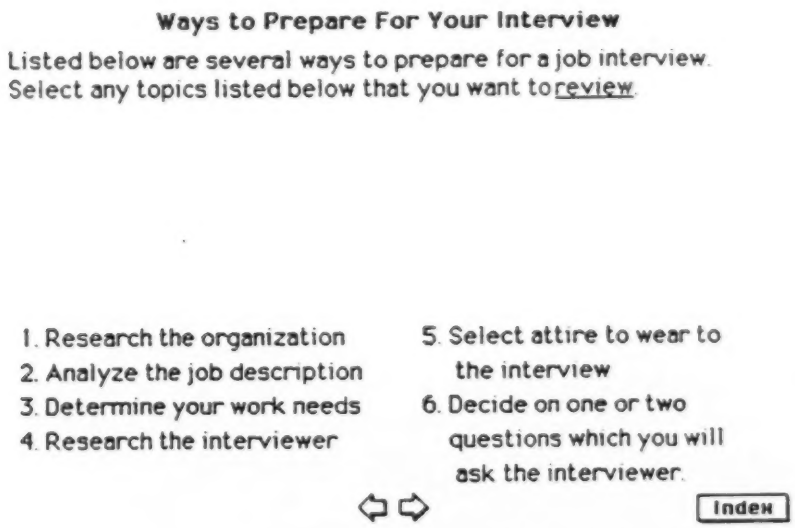
Ways to Prepare For Your Interview
Listed below are several ways to prepare for a job interview.
Select any topics listed below that you want to review.
1. Research the organization
2. Analyze the job description
3. Determine your work needs
4. Research the interviewer
5. Select attire to wear to the interview
6. Decide on one or two questions which you will ask the interviewer.
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Figure 4: List of Ways to Prepare for the Interview

The "Ways to Prepare for Your Interview" card , after the "research the

organization" button was selected by the user is shown in Figure 5. All the hidden fields, as in this picture, were small enough to allow the user to see what card they were on (by reading the title) and what their choices were (listed on the bottom of the screen).

(Insert Figure 5)

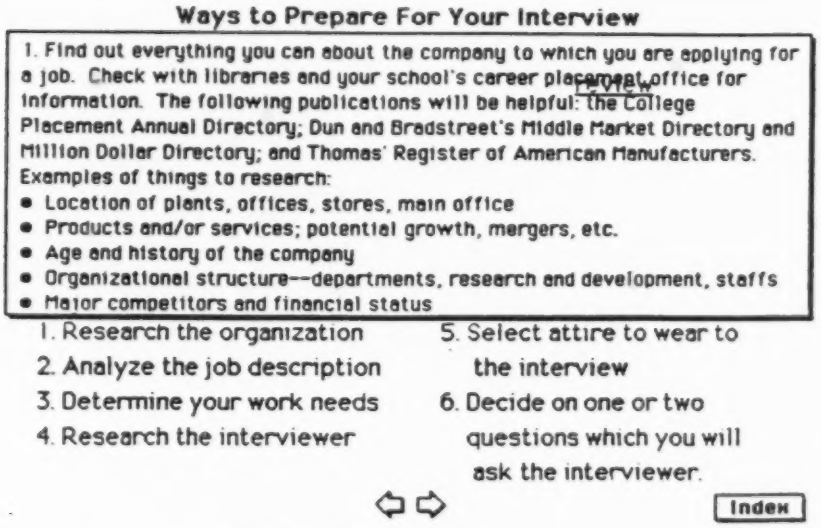
Ways to Prepare For Your Interview
1. Find out everything you can about the company to which you are applying for a job. Check with libraries and your school's career placement office for information. The following publications will be helpful: the College Placement Annual Directory; Dun and Bradstreet's Middle Market Directory and Million Dollar Directory; and Thomas' Register of American Manufacturers.
Examples of things to research:
• Location of plants, offices, stores, main office
• Products and/or services; potential growth, mergers, etc.
• Age and history of the company
• Organizational structure--departments, research and development, staffs
• Major competitors and financial status
1. Research the organization
2. Analyze the job description
3. Determine your work needs
4. Research the interviewer
5. Select attire to wear to the interview
6. Decide on one or two questions which you will ask the interviewer.
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Figure 5: Research the Organization

If another field is selected when a hidden field is displayed, the field activated by the button will replace the first field selected. For example, if the user selected "analyzing the job description" question button, the review box with information on the job description question would replace the box explaining "reseach the organization" question.

The project team also explored other features of Hypercard. The project manager and programmer added the following:

1. Digitized sounds (like applause) to provide reinforcement to users.
2. Speech that was generated at first by a speech synthesizer and later was digitized.
3. Pasted illustrations onto cards, using computer clip art and scanned illustrations, both of which were altered with the paint features that are part of Hypercard.
4. Added some special effects and simple animation using both Hypercard's English like scripting language and alteration of the pictures on the card.

Procedures

Students from three sections of a graduate level course, "Interviewing Dynamics of Face-to-Face Communication," and students from three sections of a senior level course, "Writing in Your Profession," participated in the pilot study. The composite sample consisted of 54 interviewing students and 73 writing students. In addition, three faculty members observed students when the software was tested.

This project was not designed to determine if one treatment was better than another. Instead the project was designed to determine the

perceptions of experienced and inexperienced interviewing students on the software. The research took place in the Macintosh Laboratory. Students from the interviewing classes were classified as experienced users, while students from the writing classes were classified as inexperienced users. After completing the program students were asked to respond to two open questions:

1. What did you like about the software?
2. What did you dislike about the software?

Students also responded to several closed questions:

1. Did you enjoy learning/reviewing information about the employment interview?
2. Did you feel comfortable using the software?
3. Did you enjoy using this program?
4. Before testing the software did you feel capable of playing the role of the interviewer in the employment interview?
5. After testing the software did you feel capable of playing the role of the interviewer in the employment interview?
6. Before testing the software did you feel capable of playing the role of the interviewee in the employment interview?
7. After testing the software did you feel capable of playing the role of the interviewee in the employment interview?

Results

Members ofthe project team were pleased with the results of the study. Over 80 percent of the participants from the experienced and inexperienced groups felt that the amount of information in the review stacks, and the explanations about the responses to the questions concerning whether the answers were correct or incorrect were the most important advantages of the software program. Other comments stated by at least 50 percent of the group were:

1. This is an excellent way to review for a test on interviewing.
2. This is an excellent way to learn/review how to play the role of the interviewer/interviewee.
3. Information is immediately accessible.

Most students did not list anything under the question on what they disliked about the program. One reason for this is that students worked in teams and much interpersonal communication occurred between them when they were doing the exercise. Both verbally and nonverbally users appeared to enjoy the exercise. Approximately 20 percent of the students felt that more graphics and digitized sound could be used. Based on student feedback the research team has added several illustrations and more digitized sounds. For example, applause has been added for correct answers as this provided positive reinforcement to the users. The revisions were

made possible by a $2000.00 grant through Project Sunrise, funded by the Kellogg Foundation.

The chi square statistics were completed to determine the differences between experienced and inexperienced students on the closed-ended questions. No significant differences occurred between groups on the first three questions. In fact, over 90 percent responded "yes" to the first three questions. Significant differences ($p < .01$) occurred between groups for the two questions beginning with "before." Experienced students felt capable to play these roles, while inexperienced students did not feel capable to play these roles. These results are not surprising as experienced students have a background in the fundamentals of interviewing.

A discussion was held with members of the classroom units after they participated in the exercise. Members of the interviewing classes felt the software program was an excellent way to learn interviewing terminology and liked the way the material was covered in the software program. They also felt that McDowell's article (1987) on the pre-interview variables, cover letter, and resume should be discussed prior to viewing the software as this would prepare students for all parts of employment interview process.

Writing students also felt that the software was helpful to prepare students to play both roles in the employment interview. They liked the review cards and the ability to move with ease between the review cards, stacks, and questions. They also liked the instant feedback on thier

responses to questions.

In addition to the student groups, three faculty members from college placement offices have viewed the software and feel it is an excellent source for students to complete before preparing for the employment interview. Overall, the software provides both inexperienced and experienced interviewing students with information that will help them to perform effectively both the interviewer and interviewee roles in the employment interview.

Summary

Employment interviewing is a Hypercard application that:

1. helps users learn/ review the fundamentals of interviewing and see how those fundamentals apply to employment interviewing.
2. guides users through the process of preparing and conducting an interview, both from the viewpoint of the interviewee and interviewer.

References

McDowell, Earl. "Perceptions of the Ideal Cover Letter and Ideal Resume," *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 17 (1987) 179-191.

Sincoff, Michael and Goyer, Robert. *Interviewing*, Macmillian Publishing Co.: New York, 1984.

Stewart, Charles and Cash, William. *Interviewing: Principles and Practices*, Wm. C. Brown Publishers: Dubuque, Iowa, 1988.

How Would You Prepare?

D. Congratulations! This is the best combination. You have analyzed the job description and need to reflect on your strengths and weaknesses in reference to the position and the company. Also, if you are knowledgeable about the company when you begin the interview, the interviewer will see that you are genuinely interested in the job.

A. Research the company and research the interviewer.
B. Review your resume and select attire to wear to the interview.
C. Research the interviewer and review your resume.
D. Review your resume and research the company.

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Figure 6: Correct Response to Questions